

Forum

IJMH

The International Journal of
Maritime History
2020, Vol. 32(1) 160–171

DOI: 10.1177/0843871419886804
journals.sagepub.com/home/ijh


Privateers and ports in the mid-Atlantic: Salé and the Canary Islands, c.1600–1850

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Abstract
Privateering was a common enterprise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the waters between the Azores, the Canary Islands and the Iberian Peninsula. Within this 'oceanic triangle', both Salé, on the Moroccan coast, and the Canary Islands, in the domains of the Spanish Crown, played an important role. Although privateers from Salé and the Canary Islands evolved in different ways, they were intricately linked through their proximity to one another. This article explores the relationships between the two and the impact of privateering on their respective ports.

Keywords
Africa's north Atlantic façade, port communities, privateering

The case of Morocco and its great port on the Atlantic seaboard: Salé

The Salé Rovers, as with other Barbary corsairs from other small Moroccan ports, had their golden age in the first half of the seventeenth century. Their lucrative exploits revitalised the economy of Salé and its port and propelled the corsairs to international renown. The major raids and landings by the Barbary corsairs on the Canary Islands took place before 1650, mainly affecting Lanzarote and Fuerteventura.

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Corsairs continued to disrupt trade during these centuries and therefore influenced the development of the largest ports that connected them to the regional – and international – markets where they could find buyers for their plunder when local buyers were not available. The main arena of corsair activity linked to this port was the Atlantic Ocean, particularly the area located between the islands of Cape Verde and Cape Finisterre, where the Canary Islands are, of course, located. From the seventeenth century onwards, other Moroccan ports came into prominence alongside Salé as they expanded their reach into the ocean. The crisis of the trans-Saharan trade routes, political erosion and the influx of thousands of immigrants into Morocco had made the opening of the Atlantic economy a new reality for its coastal settlements. The gradual decline of Portuguese influence in many ports after the mid-sixteenth century also helped to unlock Morocco's maritime potential.

There are, however, other factors that explain this renaissance of the Moroccan ports. The gradual influx of new men made theft on the high seas very profitable for their businesses. The city developed an aura of wealth, both among the surrounding population and in rural Morocco, but also among distant populations – corsairs and seamen from the Maghreb, Turks and, above all, Europeans. Their numbers were swelled by Europeans and corsairs who had fled from ports occupied by the Spanish (Larache in 1610 and La Mamora in 1614), who were still Christians or had converted to Islam.

Salé became a port that offered an institutional, financial and military reception to any corsair who wished to settle there. In addition to the Moriscos, the most important social element among the new inhabitants of Salé was undoubtedly that of the converts to Islam, the *'uluj*, also known as European renegades, who had 'turned Turk', and had come to seek their fortune on the Moroccan coast.[1] The promises of booty and social ascent continued to attract the Portuguese, Spanish and French. Among the most prominent of the seafarers was a large Dutch contingent, whose contribution in nautical matters was considerable. This is the case of the famous Jan Janszoon van Haarlem, commonly known as Murat Reis the Younger, who rose to prominence when the Salé Rovers were at the height of their powers, in 1622. He served as Grand Admiral of the newly founded Republic of Salé and governor of the *Diwan* at the end of 1620s. He appointed one of his compatriots, Mathys van Bostel Oosterlynch, as his deputy. It was he who led the extraordinary expedition, with a small squadron of three ships – including two from Algiers – to Iceland in the summer of 1627, sacking Grindavik and then Reykjavik, and taking 400 captives.[2]

A great many Maghrebis also added to the numbers in the Barbary ports. Originating from the regencies of Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers, according to an anonymous captive

1. Leila Maziane, *Salé et ses corsaires (1666–1727), un port de course marocain au XVIIe siècle* (Caen, 2007); Leila Maziane, 'Salé au XVIIe siècle, une terre d'asile morisque sur le littoral Atlantique marocain', in *Les Morisques d'un bord à l'autre de la Méditerranée, Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 79 (2009), 359–72; Leila Maziane, 'Étrangers et transferts techniques au Maroc à l'époque moderne', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 84 (2012), 173–83.
2. Karl Samari Hreinsson and Adam Nichols, *The Travels of Reverend Olafur Egilsson* (Washington D.C., 2016); Thorsteinn Helgason, *The Corsairs' Longest Voyage: The Turkish Raid on Iceland 1627* (Amsterdam, 2018).

'they are more familiar with the geography than the Salé Rovers',[3] and large numbers of them went to Salé in search of gain and glory, such as Tunisian corsairs Omar El-Hâdj, Mohamed Turkî and Yahyâ Trabelsî. Naturally, the numbers also grew thanks to the influx of Moroccans from inland, testament to the exodus of a great many rural people who were fleeing from the misery and the epidemics that ravaged the Moroccan countryside in the first half of the seventeenth century. They flocked to a thriving city in search of a livelihood aboard a corsair.

The success of Salé and its widening theatre of privateer operations may also be explained by the scale of its resources. The size of the fleet reflected the growth of corsair activity in Salé, stimulated in turn by the birth of the Republic of Salé in 1627, when Salé and Tétouan possessed 60 vessels between them.

These ships possessed two qualities – speed and lightness – which were key factors in operational efficiency, since naval raids depended essentially on mobility, both for attack and escape. They were generally equipped with two masts and, as the French Consul of Salé, Jean-Baptiste Estelle, astutely noted, their sails were disproportionate to the size of the hull: 'One of their twenty-gun ships has as many sails as one of the King's forty-gun ships'.[4]

In addition to these technical aspects, corsair vessels carried sizeable crews, especially for boarding, where numerical superiority was a major weapon. 'The ships' crews are always numerous and that is why you should always fear their attacks,' wrote Laurent, Chevalier d'Arvieux, in around 1670. In short, everything was geared to speed and power in the attack.[5]

In their heyday, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Salé Rovers went beyond their usual theatre of operations – the Atlantic ocean and the Iberian coast – and ventured into the high seas, extending out to a radius of 500 to 600 miles and transforming the seas between the Canary Islands, the Azores and Cape Finisterre into their hunting ground. This was the area in which the Barbary corsairs carried out most of their raids.

Their privateering was based on the use of increasingly powerful vessels. The Salé Rovers benefited from their geographical position and naval experience to become the terror of the western seas: 'Lord, save us from the Saletins,' was a prayer offered in services of the Diocese of Coutances in Normandy.

The Salé Rovers did, in fact, undertake long summer campaigns in poorly protected regions further to the north. Their campaigns took them to the Isles of Scilly, off the tip of Cornwall, to capture fishing boats returning from Newfoundland. The fishermen of Newfoundland were particularly hard-hit by these corsairs, who came every year to English and French waters to watch for them as they departed and returned. 'Around the year 1625,' wrote commander Lacroix, 'the island of Lundy, at the entrance to the Bristol

3. *Histoire d'un captif acheté à Maroc dans laquelle sont contenus les travaux des esclaves chrétiens et autres particularités de la cour du dit Empereur tant de son gouvernement que des mœurs du pays, Composée par lui même.* (n.d.), 9.
4. Mémoire de Jean-Baptiste Estelle, du 1er février 1701, *SIHM*, s. 2, Fr. T. VI, 233.
5. Mémoire du Chevalier d'Arvieux, *Mémoires* . . . , recueillis de ses mémoires originaux et mis en ordre par le R.P. J. B. Labat, Paris, Ch. J–B. Delespine, 1735, (rédigés vers 1670), 6 vol. T. V, 264.

Channel, was occupied by pirates from Salé and Algiers; they turned it into an operational base on the English coast. They were chased off in 1633 by Spanish buccaneers who then took control of the island for their own benefit.'[6] A few years later, one of the 30 corsair ships that departed from Salé to ravage the Atlantic coast was captured at the mouth of the River Thames.

In fact, since the breakdown of peace negotiations with Salé in 1631, England had been plundered by Salé Rovers in its own waters.[7] But their most spectacular exploits came in 1635 and 1636. Using Nordic pilots and flying the English flag, they set off from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in great numbers to seize ships returning from Newfoundland, and even ventured as far as Devon,[8] St George's Channel and the mouth of the River Severn to plunder ships sailing from England to Ireland.[9] The number of captures grew so quickly that the mayor of Plymouth wrote that 200 captives were taken to Salé in one single day.[10]

In a petition dated 12 September 1636, merchants and shipowners from the ports of Devon, Dorset and Southampton complained bitterly of the devastation and the heavy toll inflicted by Salé and Algerian corsairs. In only a few years, 47 ships had been captured and more than 3,000 Englishmen enslaved; because of this, they did not dare trade with foreign countries and were overwhelmed by having to pay for the upkeep of the wives and children of their compatriots held captive in Salé.[11] They therefore implored the Privy Council to take the necessary measures to put an end to these acts.[12] In England's West Country, the populace grew so nervous that the Lizard Lighthouse was extinguished because it 'will conduct pirates'.

The *Razzias*, raids on coastal towns and in the high seas, were extremely lucrative. Privateering was the main source of employment and Salé's primary source of revenue. It employed over 4,000 men, who often came from the city itself. Recruitment of crews for the corsair fleet provided work to more than 20 per cent of the working population.

Privateering also stimulated another branch of the port economy: commerce based on the sale of the captured ship and its goods, known as the *prize*. For more than a century,

6. Quoted by M. Perrais, 'Bretons et Barbaresques', *Gavroche*, 41 (1988), 26.
7. Letter from John Harrison to A. Carnwath, October 1631, *SIHM.* 1[ère]s. Angl, T. III, 163–6.
8. Fourth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, p. 114 and Fifth Report, 5; Report on Franciscan Manuscripts preserved at the Convent, Merchants' Quay, Dublin, 182–3 et infra, 567, 572. Quoted in *SIHM.*, 1[ère]s. t. III, 556–7, No 5.
9. S. Bhanji, *Barbary Pirates off the Devon Coast* (Chudleigh, 1996); J. B. Bookin-Weiner 'New Approaches to the Study of the Barbary Corsairs', *Revue d'Histoire maghrébine*, 13–4 (1979), 207, note 2.
10. Request to the Privy Council, *SIHM.* 1[ère]s. Angl., T. III, 258; in 1625, the mayor of Plymouth reported that during that one year the Barbary pirates had captured a thousand seamen from the West Country. Cf. Ph. Gosse, *op. cit.*, 73.
11. Request to the Privy Council before 28 December. 1636, *ibid.*, T. III, 259–62.
12. See the two letters from the Mayor of Plymouth and the Earl of Lindsey, dated 30 September and 5 October 1635, informing the Privy Council and the Secretary of State, Sir John Coke, of the presence of Salé Rovers off the Isles of Scilly, watching out for English fishermen amongst the fleet returning from Newfoundland; answer from the merchants accused by Bradshaw, December 1635, *SIHM.* 1[ère]s. Angl, T. III, 219, No 3.

a continuous flow of prizes were sold in Salé or sent on to other European ports. Sources from the first half of the seventeenth century indicate that, from 1618 to 1626, the slaves captured by Barbary corsairs were valued at more than 15 million pounds, a yearly average of about 1.6 million pounds, and that between 1620 and 1630 they raided 'more than a thousand Christian ships of all nations'.

The Barbary corsairs scandalised the Christian world, which tended to exaggerate the scale of the problem. This was the case of Father Matías de San Francisco, who swore that he saw the figure of 27 million ducats in customs records for the period from 1629 to 1639, which means that average annual income would have been of the order of 2.6 million ducats per year.

Between 1668 and 1689, about 70 French ships were captured in several Moroccan ports: 31 were captured and taken to Salé by Abdallah ben Aicha from 1686 to 1698, some of which were then sent on from this port, especially to Algiers. No fewer than 23 ships were captured in one year, between July 1668 and August 1669: 19 English and four French. In 1682, between September and the end of November, more than 30 English ships were captured.[13] Between 1732 and 1734, 12 British ships were intercepted, and 144 men taken as captives to Morocco.[14]

The fact is everyone found gainful employment through privateering, which drove the creation of not only a port economy, but also a hub that revitalised the entire hinterland of the port city, which kept on expanding. The plundering contributed, above all, to making corsair cities large cosmopolitan markets, attracting buyers and businessmen that specialised in this type of trade. The influx of goods captured by the corsairs was such that the local market, which remained relatively small, encouraged merchants to re-export them to other ports with greater commercial potential, such as Cadiz, Livorno or the French ports.

Privateering also led to a 'ransom economy' connected to the trade of European captives, and also helped to develop commercial relations with Moroccan ports and foreign trade networks; it brought in significant revenue and gave this network of ports a role in stimulating economic and urban life, adding a new dimension above and beyond life before the growth of the corsair economy.

Canary Island privateers and the benefits that foreign privateers brought to the islands

Canary Island privateers were much less active and came into their own later than the Salé Rovers. However, foreign privateers operating in the surrounding waters also affected the ports and commerce of the islands. The main ports were located in what were known as the islands of the Crown: Gran Canaria, La Palma and Tenerife. On Gran Canaria the main ports were located around the city of Las Palmas, on La Palma it was Santa Cruz de La Palma, while on Tenerife the main ports were those of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Puerto de la Cruz and Garachico. They were the best defended and most

13. Letter from Saint–Amans to Seignelay, 23 November 1682, *SIHM*, 2e s. Fr. T. II., 288.
14. M. Morsy, *La relation de Thomas Pellow, une lecture du Maroc au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1983), 19.

populated ports of the Canary Islands, through which most of the islands' wealth passed, much of which came from trade with the Indies.

The islands were a magnet for privateers: as well the riches they produced, they also had remarkable strategic value owing to their location at the centre of the sea routes connecting Europe, Africa and America. Ships plotting a course to these continents, and also to Asia, had to pass through their waters. The ports of the Canary Islands served as ports of call, while also being affected, both positively and negatively, by privateering.

In the 1650s the Anglo-Dutch wars broke out. Within this warlike context a series of attacks by Dutch privateers took place in waters near the Canary Islands at the beginning of the 1650s. They captured several English ships and the ships of their Portuguese allies, which were then sold in Canary Island ports, particularly in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

The islands witnessed clashes between the Dutch and the English in the 1650s that played out through privateering. Several English vessels were captured and sold in the ports of Gran Canaria during these years.[15] Both English ships and those of their Portuguese allies were captured.[16] Las Palmas was an important market for the captured vessels and the prizes seized by Dutch privateers in the mid-seventeenth century.[17] The islands were also a staging post for privateers operating in nearby waters. In the 1650s a Dutch ship named *Santa Gertrudis* left Amsterdam and stopped at La Palma, where it stocked up on fruit before heading to the fort of Arguin, where it was to engage in acts of privateering.[18] These purchases made by privateer vessels that stopped off in the ports undoubtedly revived the economy in a time of war.

Dutch privateering that targeted the English and Portuguese coincided with an increase in commercial transactions in Canary Island ports in the 1650s and 1660s and with the growth of smuggling, particularly when considering the trading possibilities with the Americas offered by these ports. In 1652, Ambassador Antonio Brun warned of

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15. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Las Palmas (hereafter A.H.P.L.P.), Ascanio, Luis, leg. 1.264, 1653, Gran Canaria, fol. 64 r.v. In March 1653, Alexander Ronstuoy, English captain of *El pájaro canario*, who was stranded in Gando, said that he had left England for the Canary Islands and that, when he was in sight of Las Palmas, he was captured by a Dutchman, who took him to the port of Gando and took all his merchandise.
16. Ernst van den Boogaart, ed., *La expansión holandesa en el Atlántico, 1580–1800* (Madrid, 1992), 155.
17. A.H.P.L.P., Ascanio, Luis, leg. 1.264, 1653, Gran Canaria, fols. 70 r.–72 v. In March 1653, Sebastian Tuynman Pechelingue, captain of the carrack *El príncipe mozo de Orange*, who had left with a commission from the states of Zeeland and Holland, and was docked in Puerto de La Luz, said that he had captured a patache with English crew and wine in Puerto de La Cruz, and that he had brought it to Gran Canaria to sell his prize. Also in A.H.P.L.P., Ascanio, Luis, leg. 1.264, 1653, Gran Canaria, fol. 108 r.v. In April 1653 they sold the ship *Nuestra Senora de las Mercedes, San Juan y San Antonio*, docked in Puerto de La Luz and purchased from Dutch captain Leonar de Brant, who took it there after capturing it from the Portuguese. Also in A.H.P.L.P., Moya, Francisco de, leg. 1.204, 1653, Gran Canaria, fol. 414 r.v. In December 1653, the English ship *La Fama* was sold in Las Palmas; it was purchased from Dutchman Juan Alberto Banestenbeq, captain of the privateer carrack *Sta. Cecilia*, who had captured it and brought it to Puerto de La Luz.
18. Archivo de la Real Academia de la Historia (A.R.A.H.), Colección Mata Linares, tomo 99, fols. 428 r.–429 v.

the fraud being committed. In 1651, he had been warned in Amsterdam that many Dutch ships were going to the Canary Islands to take large quantities of goods from Holland that were later traded in the Indies. In turn, Spanish ships transported merchandise from the Indies to the islands, including silver that Dutch and French vessels waited for on the high seas before the ship entered the port or for the ship to provide them with bundles as it left the port and headed for the Indies.[19] Therefore, all these reports indicate that Dutch privateering in the 1650s, together with official trade and contraband, was positive for the development of the ports of the Canary Islands.

This activity was influenced by periods of war marked by milestones such as the naval attack of Robert Blake on Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1657,[20] the attacks on Tenerife under the command of Woodes Rogers and Jennings during the War of the Spanish Succession, or the attacks on Fuerteventura in 1740[21] during the War of Jenkins' Ear and that of Windham on La Gomera in 1743, during the War of the Austrian Succession.[22]

British privateers mainly used the port of Funchal, due to their alliance with Portugal, to receive and sell Spanish prizes captured in Canary Island waters. The first half of the eighteenth century became a second golden age for British privateering.[23] In the second half of the seventeenth century, the French attacked some ships in the seas around the Canary Islands, especially during the many periods of war. The French went as far as entering the ports themselves; on 24 October 1676, French ships entered Puerto de la Luz and captured the *almojarife* (tax collector) of Gran Canaria, captain Diego Derro. In March 1692, a French privateer ship bombarded the Arrecife fortress and the ships that were sheltering in Puerto Naos; four vessels headed out into the open sea, two of which were captured.[24]

At the same time, raids were also conducted by Barbary corsairs, especially from the ports of Salé[25] and Algiers. Although there were no major attacks on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura during this period, there were raids on merchant and fishing vessels. The

19. Archivo General de Simancas (A.G.S.), Estado, leg. 2263, 118. The ambassador was ordered to make representations on their behalf so that the Dutch would faithfully observe the peace, trying to uphold a case brought against the Dutch ships.
20. Antonio Rumeu De Armas, *Canarias y el Atlántico. Piraterías y ataques navales*. Tomo I (Madrid, 1991), 133–207.
21. Antonio de Béthencourt Massieu y A. Rodríguez, *Ataques ingleses contra Fuerteventura 1740* (Puerto del Rosario, 1992).
22. Antonio de Béthencourt Massieu, 'As sociedades insulares no contexto das inter–influencias culturales do século XVIII. Reflexiones sobre la repercusión del corso marítimo en las Islas Canarias', in *As sociedades insulares no contexto das inter–influencias culturales do século XVIII* (Funchal 1994), 51–92. Antonio de Béthencourt Massieu, 'Canarias en los conflictos navales de 1727 y 1739–1748. Nuevas aportaciones', *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, serie IV, 7 (1994), 51–70.
23. Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter A.H.N.), Estado, leg. 550. José de Andoanegue, commander of the Canary Islands, reported that on 16 August 1741 an English ship had captured an empty ship from the islands in August 1741 and that it was not known what course it had then taken.
24. Carmelo C. Torres Torres, *Las relaciones comerciales de Fuerteventura, Lanzarote y Tenerife (1688–1730)* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of La Laguna, 2016), 390.
25. Maziane, 'Salé et ses corsaires'.

Barbary corsairs had enough of a presence in the Canary Islands to disrupt activity in some ports. In 1676, two vessels blockaded the port of Santa Cruz de La Palma as they sought to capture a ship named *el Obispo*.[26] In 1678, two Barbary ships captured two vessels near the San Pedro fort in the city of Las Palmas.[27] Barbary corsairs were more active in the seventeenth century than in the eighteenth but, even so, there were several attacks and captures in the 1710s and 1720s,[28] as well as the destruction of Punta Gorda on La Palma in 1697 and, as late as 1749, the last great raid on the town of Femés in Lanzarote. The cost for the Canary Islands was considerable: destruction of buildings and crops, loss of documents, transfers of goods to secure locations, slave escapes, loss of ships and merchandise, payment of ransoms, loss of time in transport, expenses incurred from mobilising the militia and loss of human resources due to death and capture, etc.[29] Attacks on fishing boats also continued on the Barbary Coast.

As a counterweight to the losses, privateering could also bring wealth. The privateering activity that brought revenue to the ports of the Canary Islands was always officially sanctioned, commissioned by the Spanish Crown or, in the case of privateers operating under European powers that used the ports to sell on their prizes, always with the letter of marque of their respective states. The Dutch and French privateers that sold vessels and merchandise in Canary Island ports created a market specifically for the sale of their prizes. It should be borne in mind that privateering played a part in increasing the wealth of the ports and expanding trade in the Canary Islands at a time when they were affected by acts of war against them and the paralysis of long-distance trade; it thus bolstered the economy and gave it fresh impetus. A conflict between two foreign powers meant 'good fishing in troubled waters'. Not only was a market created through the sale of vessels and merchandise but also the hiring of crews, payments for various types of welding tasks, construction of defensive infrastructures, etc. Moreover, only on very few occasions was the Spanish Crown not a party to the international conflicts during the period under study.

Canary Island privateering was also restricted to specific moments of war. It was not a cost-free enterprise: it entailed a range of administrative, tax, hiring and maintenance expenses. It was also subject to somewhat restrictive rules that did not leave the field entirely open, or attractive, for private initiative based around the main ports. In a region without much privateering tradition of its own, Canary Island privateers were few in number and had few resources and little experience. The spoils of privateering for the islands depended to a large extent on the evolution of the wars. More prizes than losses would have generated wealth but, in general, naval warfare had a high cost for the Canary Island fleet and so the merchant bourgeoisie and agrarian oligarchy, with their strong

26. Juan B. Loreno Rodríguez, *Noticias para la Historia de la isla de La Palma* (Santa Cruz de La Laguna, 2000), 32.
27. Francisco E. Caballero Mújica, Documentos episcopales canarios (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1996).
28. Carmelo C. Torres Torres, 'Las relaciones comerciales', 394. In 1716, the people of Lanzarote captured Algerians who had landed on the island from a Dutch pink.
29. Alberto Anaya Hernández, *Moros en la costa. Dos siglos de corsarismo berberisco en las Islas Canarias (1569–1749)* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2006), 235–45.

connections to the British merchant colony, were desirous of restoring peace and reviving the traditional industries.

The Canary Islanders sent out constant patrols to drive away the privateers that threatened their waters in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These were defensive acts rather than a serious attempt to form any kind of Canary Island privateer fleet, due, among other reasons, to the fact that they had not been issued with a letter of marque; they only had the consent of the authorities. In 1661 the ecclesiastical council agreed to petition the king to put the bishopric's taxes (*subsidio* and *excusado*), or part of them, towards the funding of two frigates to guard the islands' coasts against the constant threat of the Barbary corsairs.[30]

The Spanish Crown was not noted for its support for privateering except in certain specific places and special circumstances, such as Dunkirk. This reluctance generally hampered the development of Spanish privateering during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When the authorities did react, the technological and numerical advantage of the enemy powers was already insurmountable. Opposition to the issuance of letters of marque was great, both from the *Casa de Contratación*, which feared a disruption of its monopoly with the Indies and the potential for smuggling, and from the Council of the Indies, fearing that privateering might spiral out of control. We have to bear in mind that the first privateer commission was not granted in the Americas until 1674.[31]

Acts of privateering were rarely committed by Canary Islanders. This does not mean that it did not arise, but in general, they had neither the experience nor the resources to counteract the strength of the British. The main port for Canary Island privateering was Santa Cruz de Tenerife. According to records, throughout the seventeenth century Canary Islanders only requested letters of marque to operate in the Atlantic on three occasions, all from the island of Tenerife, but no privateering expeditions were actually undertaken.[32] In the eighteenth century, too, privateering was very limited and produced discouraging results. Moreover, the British almost immediately countered this threat with warships, putting a swift end to the deployment of Spanish privateers. In 1748, an English sloop named *Maria*, captained by Guillerme Perigor, bearing a cargo of cod and pine boards, was captured by a Spanish corsair brig, captained by Pascual de Sosa, a resident of Tenerife, off the coast of Madeira. He renamed the vessel *Santa Ana, Santo Antonio e Almas*.[33] But the adventures of the Canary Island corsair Pascual de Sosa were short-lived, since his corsair brig, *San Telmo, Ntra. Sra. de Candelaria e Almas*, was captured by the warship *Chesterfield*, captained by O'Brien Dudley.[34]

We are fortunate to have located the instructions to encourage privateering by Canary Islanders at the beginning of the War of Jenkins' Ear. On 21 November 1739, Philip V, as

30. Francisco E. Caballero Mújica, '*Documentos episcopales canarios'*.
31. Gerardo González de Vega, *Mar Brava: Historias de corsarios, piratas y negreros españoles* (Madrid, 2013), 35–6.
32. Enrique Otero Lana, 'Comercio y contrabando de los corsarios españoles en el Atlántico', *Homenaje a Antonio de Béthencourt Massieu*. Tomo II, (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1995), 677–8. One in 1657, another in 1664 and another in 1677.
33. Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo, Alfándega do Funchal, Alf. No 149, 1748, fol. 79 r.
34. Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo, Alfándega do Funchal, Alf. No 149, 1748, fol. 83 v.

he had done in mainland Spain, bestowed a commission of war upon the inhabitants of the Canary Islands against the British, with a theatre of operations that reached from the south of the islands to Spain, taking in the coasts of the islands and the Barbary coast. This commission authorised them to take the prizes captured off the coasts of Africa and in the space between the islands of Madeira and Terceira to the ports of the Canary Islands for their own profit. To this end letters of marque had to be drawn up and issued to the shipowners. In the instruction given in Cádiz on 21 January 1740, the person entrusted with this mandate was Domingo Miguel de la Guerra, judge of the Indies for the Canary Islands and subdelegate of the *Intendencia General de Marina* of Cádiz for privateer commissions in the Canary Islands and the prize court. The order had been issued by Philip, Duke of Parma, Admiral General of Spain and the Indies.

Privateering was highly regulated. Chapter 9 of the royal ordinance on privateering stipulated that all ships bearing cargoes belonging to enemies, and the merchandise of subjects of Spain or of friendly powers that were found in the enemy ship, shall be considered lawful prize, as attributable to the shipowners.

If the shipowners encountered a vessel with a letter of marque and a British flag and were shown a safe conduct or passport from the Admiral General, they should not stop it. Shipowners who applied for a letter of marque had to provide the subdelegate with a report containing information about the captain, place of origin, name and class of vessel, tonnage, cannons and swivel guns the craft would be carrying, and a detailed list of the number of other weapons of each class, munitions and provisions with which it was to be equipped, and finally the number of crew members. First, they had to post a regular bond. They were not permitted to receive or arm vessels that were not seaworthy or properly equipped and that had a capacity of less than 80 and more than 300 tons. The crew ratio would be one man per ton. The shipowner also had to post a performance bond for the vessel: 80 to 100 tons, 5,000 ducats; from 100 to 150, 7,000 ducats; from 150 to 200, 10,000 ducats; from 200 to 250, 12,000 ducats; from 250 to 300, 15,000 ducats.

Subdelegate Domingo Miguel de la Guerra had to be in direct and constant contact with the Captain General of the Canary Islands to ensure there were no delays in the commission, and to provide the provisions, weapons, munitions and other supplies required by the corsairs.[35]

On 22 November 1741, José Campillo sent a letter from Madrid to Andrés Bonito Pignatelli, commander general of the Canary Islands, testifying to the arrival of Antonio Miguel, a resident of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, in Gran Canaria on his corsair sloop with an English corvette that he had captured in tow. From that island he had been forced to take to the sea in a hurry without time replenish the ship's water supply and was also subjected to a rigorous quarantine upon arrival in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. At the same time, the proceeds from the lawful prize were prevented from being handed over to the shipowner by Domingo Miguel de la Guerra. This provoked the ire of the Crown. A letter dated 14 December 1741 stated that Domingo Miguel de la Guerra had arranged for two residents of these islands, Antonio Miguel and Juan Piñero, to arm their vessels and attack the British with two ships that, since they weighed no more than 40 tons, ran the risk of ignominious defeat. For that reason, two vessels were armed and equipped to

35. Archivo del Museo Naval, 0005 Ms 0005/290.

attack Barbary corsairs and British privateers without the intervention of the aforementioned subdelegate, and both Antonio Miguel and Piñero were urged by the Crown to undertake new privateering expeditions.[36]

A letter addressed to the Marqués de la Ensenada in San Lorenzo, dated 21 November 1744, described the capture of a British brig loaded with cod, with which captain Antonio Miguel entered Santa Cruz de Tenerife on 18 November 1744. It stated that, since this had been done without a letter of marque from the Admiral General, the prize would therefore be attributed to the subdelegate of the navy. Another letter listed the two British prizes that had been seized and conducted to the port of Santa Cruz by the corsair Jacome Canese and the prize captured at Fayal by captain Antonio Miguel with his sloop *San Telmo*, as well as another prize also brought to Santa Cruz. The corsair Jacome Canese was commissioned in Vigo to carry out acts of privateering in Africa and off the coasts of Spain and had seized the British prizes in Santa Cruz de Berbería.[37]

Conclusions

Although they differed in certain aspects, the ports of Salé and the Canary Islands both benefited from acts of privateering. In the case of Salé, its golden age was in the first half of the seventeenth century, when the city's thriving economy brought many investment opportunities and attracted many from inland Morocco and even from abroad. Undoubtedly the profits to be made from the sale of prizes (ships, merchandise and ransoms) was the main incentive, while slave trading was very much a secondary consideration, since the goal was to make quick, easy money. Privateering was the main source of employment and the driver of Salé's economy during this period. Any possible accumulation of capital was consumed by naval investments, the purchase of luxury goods and the total and growing dependence on European arms, ships and manufactured goods.

In the Canary Islands, privateering was much less prevalent; in fact, the region suffered greatly from the attacks of North European privateers and Barbary corsairs, which weakened its position. However, its ports and merchants benefited from the sale of prizes seized by enemy powers but sold in Canary Island ports. This activity was linked to smuggling, which also boosted the economy. Privateering was also encouraged amongst the Canary Islanders in the first half of the eighteenth century but always had to overcome the barriers erected by the islands' elites, who profited more from agricultural exports and international trade. The inexperience of Canary Island privateers, the high taxes they had to pay, the loss of competitiveness in the technological race and the great dependence of the islands' economy on foreign trade made it unattractive. Any possible accumulation of capital was hampered by the dependence on goods imported from Northern Europe due to the lack of a productive and competitive industrial economy. This last crucial element – dependence – was a common thread that ran through privateering in both Salé and the Canary Islands and that helps us to understand their eventual decline.

36. AMN 0005 MS 0005/289.
37. Archivo Intermedio de Canarias, Presas de buques. Legislación y asuntos. Caja 554, carpeta 6. Starting date 30 September 1719, ending date 18 May 1800.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Our research work was supported by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad through the HAR2016-81812-REDT grant.

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